

Labour Notes.

THE Ballarat miners have placed on record their recognition of the fact that the men at Broken Hill are fighting the battle of the Australasian miners generally.

The miners at Bendigo are also in full sympathy with their confreres at Broken Hill. They have sent them a substantial sum of money, and have voted a fortnightly levy of one shilling in aid of them.

An auxiliary force of boy pickets has been organised at Broken Hill. They are employed chiefly as scouts to watch and report any attempt that may be made to introduce "blacklegs."

The *Barrier Miner* quotes the following letter from the pen of a well-known South Australian mining-man:—"Since the strike I have asked many shareholders the only question that need concern them; that is, the amount of pecuniary benefit they expect to derive from stopping the ore by contract, but no one seems to have any idea. The directors must know approximately, at any rate, as it is not to be supposed for a moment that they dared the possibility of a strike without being certain that the proposed alteration would be advantageous to the shareholders. It appears that there are about 800 men stopping at £3 per week, £124,800 a year. Time only will tell which will prove the cheaper in the long run, day work or contract; but for the sake of argument we will assume that the same quantity of ore can be sent to surface by contract for £83,200, a reduction of 33½ per cent. This is by no means likely to happen, but the figures will serve for illustration. This saving of £41,600 would increase the monthly dividend by the handsome sum of less than 1d per share; so if, owing to the strike, no dividends are paid for three months, and even if the men are beaten, it will take six years for the shareholders to get back what they are out of pocket by the suspension. Now we will suppose that these 800 "stoppers" by some supernatural agency became suddenly imbued with intense love for the shareholder, and absolutely refused to accept any payment whatever for their labour, this would only add 2½d per share to his monthly income. Is it worth while risking so much for so little? Is a question the shareholders might fairly take a poll on: If they decide that the game is worth the candle, it would greatly strengthen the hands of the board. If the contrary, it would end this poverty-producing strike at once. In the face of figures one might say to the directors, as the Jew who was eating a bit of ham remarked to the thunderstorm, you needn't kick up such a fuss over a trifle."

At the annual meeting of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce held the other day, a prudent reserve was maintained respecting the strike at Broken Hill. This roused the indignation of a certain member, who condemned the omission and proposed the following resolution:—"That in the opinion of this chamber it is the duty of the Government to afford protection to the inhabitants of this country and to ensure that full liberty to which the citizen is entitled; and that the Government is also bound to afford all colonists full protection over the enjoyment of their property." Just so. But is not the working man also entitled to enjoy his property? He should have such a benefit of his strength and skill, all the property he possesses, as will enable him to live in decent and frugal comfort. This consideration, however, hardly entered into the resolution. The resolution found no seconder—and consequently lapsed, to the additional indignation of the mover.

At a recent meeting of the men on strike one of the speakers referred to the Pope's encyclical, "The Pope," he said, "had published an encyclical, than which a better defence of the cause of the workers could not have been written."

If the half-yearly meeting of the shareholders in the Broken Hill Proprietary Company held the other day in Melbourne, is to be taken as generally representative of the feeling of capitalists, a rough time lies before the world. Nothing could be less conciliatory. Nothing, perhaps, could be harder or more truculent. Mr Seath, the secretary of the Broken Hill branch of the A.M.A., who had bought a share to authorise his attendance, and who addressed the meeting, met with a most ungracious hearing, and was continually interrupted. A chief offender was one Mr J. L. Purves, Q.C.—an ornament of the Melbourne Bar, it may be—bu' who could easily give odds to Chaffinbras. His reply was coarse, to the very verge of ruffianism, if not beyond it—but it earned for him the hearty applause of the assembly. A shareholder of some little decency proposed an amendment on the motion of confidence in the directors, affirming this, but recommending a conference. The motion, however, was carried. Capitalists like these are evidently laying up an infinity of additional virulence for the impending struggle.

It is not astonishing that the meeting held at Broken Hill, subsequent to that of the shareholders at Melbourne, showed a firmer front. It was recommended that the line of pickets should be strengthened, and the resolution of holding out to the utmost was reaffirmed.

The strike at Broken Hill and the events connected with it should go far towards recommending to public favour the Industrial Conciliation Bill now before the House of Representatives at Wellington, and which has been read a second time. A very important provision of the Bill is that making arbitration compulsory, but to which, in several instances, exception has been taken. It is difficult, nevertheless, to see how the measure would be otherwise effective. What likelihood, for example, would there be of influencing the dispositions of the Broken Hill directors and shareholders by a little mild persuasion, even though it were authorised by law? And who can question the justice of compulsorily keeping those directors and shareholders to their agreement?

The following pleasant sketch of the state of things in Queensland is taken from the Sydney *Workman*:—"This is the state of Queensland to-day? In from the West the Chinese are swarming unchecked, from the East the Kanaka current flows. To the North the pearl-shelling industry is already in the hands of Asiatics, who are slowly working southward and driving the whites before them, to say nothing of Javanese and Japanese. And from before the vast besetting wave of servile labour, with all its manifold evils, the white labourer is being driven southward to doubly swell the already congested Southern labour markets, or remains behind to sink down amid the degradation that must overwhelm him and drown him in its turgid current."

This is a cablegram under date Sydney, August 12:—"The Broken Hill strikers are drawing £15,000 worth of supplies weekly. The leaders assert that they have sufficient to carry on with for three or four months, even if they receive no further assistance." We doubt the figures. The number of strikers is 5,000, and it was calculated that supplies could be given from the special stores at the rate of seven shillings a week per man. That would amount to a sum of £1,750. Allowance must be made, besides, for women and children. The whole earnings of the men, however, working constantly, at the highest figure, i.e., £3 a week, would only amount to £15,000—and the average earnings were £2. Somewhere or another, then, there is evidently a mistake. What can be its object, if it has one?

The Government have granted a month's extension of the labour conditions to the Broken Hill mine owners. This prevents the mines reverting to the State through failure to perform a certain amount of work on the properties." Were it only to hinder the consequences of an attempt to introduce "blacklegs," the Government have acted wisely. The mine-owners, nevertheless, deserve little consideration. Their conduct has been exceptionally base.

We are informed by a cablegram under date, New York, August 11, that the Pittsburg mills are employing 40,000 men, and, with the exception of Carnegie's, have conceded the demands of the unions.

The Comte de Mun, although an hereditary adherent of the Royalist cause, has readily accepted the decision of the Pope as to allegiance to the Republic. "The Pope," he says, "has arisen to hold out his hand to the people, to proclaim the rights of the working man, and to tell the rich and powerful what are their duties towards the poor and the feeble. On this page, written as it were by the Papacy on the frontispiece of the coming age, a last word was wanting. Leo XIII. has written this word in urging French Catholics to accept without reserve the political form of government which French democracy has chosen." "Is it not the Pope," he continues, "who says to the people, 'They have tried to separate you from me by telling you that in order to be rich and powerful it was necessary for you to break away from the old faith that made your fathers free, and protected them against the strong and the powerful: They deceive you who say that the Church is your enemy. Behold me the successor of the Apostles, the living representative of Him Who blessed the poor on the mountain, I say to you, the people, come, I hold out my arms to receive you with your faults and errors as you are. I alone can give you what you seek, that is, justice and peace.'"

Among the more recent manifestations in France of anti-Catholic rancour has been an attack made in the Chamber on an industrial association formed in the interests of Catholic workmen in the Department du Nord, and known as "Notre Dame de l'Usine." The rules of the factory included religious observances, and, notwithstanding the aid given by it to workmen, many of whom were profitably employed, the enmity of the party hostile to religion was incurred. The consequence has been a resolution that the Government is to put into motion all the machinery of the law available for

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